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BULGARIAN TRIALS AND CONVICTIONS
OF SPIES, SABOTEURS

Convict Spies

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12 July 1951 -- On 11 July, the Sofia Regional Court held six trials of Titoist espionage agents allegedly sent to Bulgaria by the UDB (Yugoslav Secret Service) to conduct subversive activity, and of three Bulgarians who, in April of this year, tried to cross the border into Yugoslavia illegally.

In the first trial, there were six defendants from villages under the jurisdiction of Vidin, northwestern Bulgaria, who fled to Yugoslavia in the spring of 1951, placed themselves at the disposal of the UDB, and then returned to this country to engage in espionage. Since all the defendants made the "prescribed full confessions," the court sentenced them to imprisonment of 10 to 12 years.

The second trial was of two Yugoslav nationals, arrested at the border, who were en route to Bulgaria to collect political and military intelligence for the UDB. Both were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

The third and fourth trials were of two Bulgarians who fled to Yugoslavia but who were subsequently forced by the UDB to return to Bulgaria to engage in espionage. They were sentenced to 5 and 12 years' imprisonment, respectively.

The fifth trial was of a Yugoslav national from a village near the Bulgarian border. He was also forced by the UDB to go to Bulgaria to engage in subversive activity. Seized by fear, he gave himself up to the border authorities. He was sentenced to one year imprisonment.

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The sixth trial involved three Bulgarians who decided to flee to Yugoslavia. They got in touch with the Yugoslav embassy in Sofia, which obtained weapons and letters of recommendation (sic) for them. During their attempted flight, one of them was killed and the two others were arrested. The two survivors were each sentenced to 6 months in prison.

Punish Offenders

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From 29 June to 3 July of this year, the Plovdiv Regional Court held a trial of a group of agrarians of the dissolved opposition party of the late Nikola Petkov. They were accused of having secretly tried to revive the Agrarian Union for the purpose of overthrowing the existing government. The accused were the following: Dimitur Naney Kanev, former Plovdiv regional organizer of the Agrarian Union; Yordan Khadzhi Paunov, former member of the union; Ivan Mateev Shalamanov, former member of the regional committee of the Union of Agrarian Youth (of Nikola Petkov); and Rangel Kostadinov Delev, also a member of the union.

The four defendants were accused of having formed an illegal regional administrative committee of the union and of having planned the secret restoration of the party of Nikola Petkov. The group allegedly decided to establish relations with the "imperialists" and the "Titoist Fascists," to organize discontented persons in the villages, to promote the entrance of subversive elements into cooperative farms for the purpose of internal sabotage, and to prepare for armed resistance in the country. All the defendants made the customary "full confessions;" the court sentenced the first two to death and the other two to imprisonment.

During the second half of June, the Vidin Regional Court held a trial of 40 high officials of the Supply Administration accused of having stolen between 1948 and 1950 more than 150 tons of grain, worth 15,000,000 leva, from the state granaries. The 320 witnesses heard by the court confirmed the defendants' crime. Four of the defendants were sentenced to death and the others received prison sentences varying between 2 and 20 years.

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